

Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages Fund
Round 3, SubRound 1 Restoration Project Proposals for
Land Acquisition to Conserve Habitat
Doc. No. BWSC-NRD-2014-02

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Project Name: Thomas & Palmer Brook Conservation Project (Proposal No. 304)

Consensus-Based Score: 244

Review Team Members: United States Fish and Wildlife Service (1), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (2), Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (1), Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (1), and Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (1).

Summary of Criteria Discussed:

- **Criterion A1 (Natural Recovery Period):** One reviewer expressed the opinion that, because the objective of Round 3 funding is to protect land for habitat conservation (and does not fund further active, habitat restoration actions), Round 3 projects do not speed or slow the natural recovery period. Other reviewers felt that protection of land in perpetuity provides restoration benefits in advance of the natural recovery period because protection in perpetuity is not otherwise guaranteed. One reviewer agreed with this rationale and raised their score. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion A3 (Sustainable Benefits):** The reviewers discussed that the application did not specifically describe anticipated recurring intervention, maintenance or management, but that the application did reference development and implementation of a management plan and habitat improvements. Following this discussion, one reviewer lowered their score to reflect that "long-term and sustainable benefits are likely to require periodic maintenance or management". Other reviewers expressed the opinion that the proposed project would result in "long-term, self-sustaining, and comprehensive benefits" even absent recurring human intervention or maintenance. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion A7 (Enhancement of Remediation / Response Actions):** The reviewers discussed that the proposed project did not appear to have a nexus with remediation or response actions. One reviewer indicated that they had initially misunderstood the criterion and lowered their score accordingly.
- **Criterion B1 (Technical/Technological Feasibility):** The reviewers discussed that this criterion focused on the technical/technological feasibility of the proposed project to achieve Round 3 objectives (i.e., land protection to conserve habitat), and that the approach of the proposed project (land protection through fee ownership) is an accepted technique to achieve Round 3 project restoration objectives and has a demonstrated likelihood of success. One reviewer indicated that they had initially misunderstood the criterion and raised their score accordingly.
- **Criterion B2 (Technical Capacity of Applicant and Project Team):** The reviewers discussed and agreed that the applicant has a demonstrated record of successful land acquisition for habitat conservation in the region. One review noted some concern regarding the applicant's technical capacity for contract management. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.

- **Criterion B3 (Potential for Adverse Impacts):** The reviewers discussed and expressed minor differences of opinion regarding the potential for the proposed project to result in adverse environmental impacts. Two reviewers identified the potential for adverse environmental impacts associated with recreational use, site access, and implementation of a management plan (development of a management plan is identified in the project application, but specific management objectives and strategies are not identified). No reviewers changed their scores following discussion of this criterion. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion B4 (Measurable Results):** The reviewers discussed that future monitoring or evaluation of project success is not specifically described in the application. One reviewer lowered their score in agreement with this assessment. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion B5 (Contingency Actions):** The reviewers discussed that the applicant has demonstrated strong relevant experience and a record of successfully navigating the land acquisition process. Reviewers noted that the application does not state how potential impacts to project goals might be minimized, but that the experience of the project team suggests the ability to address potential problems throughout the project life. One reviewer lowered their score noting that the application itself provides limited explanation regarding how impacts to project goals would be minimized or avoided. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion B6 (Administrative Capacity of Applicant and Project Team):** The reviewers discussed that the applicant has demonstrated technical expertise and a record of success with similar land acquisition and conservation projects. One review noted some concern regarding the applicant's administrative capacity for contract management. No reviewers changed their scores following discussion of this criterion. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion C3 (Budget Justification and Understanding):** The reviewers discussed that the budget appears detailed, reasonable, and justified. Reviewers noted that budget items identified in Task 5 do not appear fundable with Round 3 NRD funds. One reviewer lowered their score for this reason. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion C4 (Leveraging of Additional Resources):** The reviewers discussed that the ratio of NRD funds to non-NRD funds identified in the application appears to be \$1.00 : \$0.069 (NRD : non-NRD). The reviewers also noted that the scoring guide does not provide a category for \$0.00 - \$0.10 in non-NRD funding per \$1.00 NRD funds requested (i.e., this application appears to fall between the "Low" and "Not Addressed" scoring categories provided for this criterion). Acknowledging this, and for consistency with the approach used by the rest of the reviewers, one reviewer raised their score from "Not Addressed" to "Low".
- **Criterion C5 (Coordination and Integration):** Reviewers discussed and identified minor differences of opinion regarding the potential for synergistic benefits. The application identifies a potential to achieve cost savings in construction of public access improvements by contracting with the same contractor used by the applicant for another Housatonic NRD restoration project. However, some reviewers noted that 1) this is not a confirmed opportunity and 2) restoration actions other than land acquisition to conserve habitat (e.g., public access improvements) are not a component of Round 3 funding. Some reviewers felt that the application did not demonstrate that the proposed project

is directly integrated or coordinated with other ongoing or planned actions in such a way that a “high potential for synergistic benefits is demonstrated”. No reviewers changed their scores following discussion of this criterion. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.

- **Criterion D2 (Fostering Future Restoration and Stewardship):** The application describes installation of a kiosk presenting information including discussion of landscape features, and some reviewers expressed the opinion that the proposed project would help foster stewardship, a behavior that may have a “direct or long lasting and positive effect on the injured natural resources and their services”. Other reviewers indicated they felt that the proposed project might provide only limited foundation for future restoration activities. No reviewers changed their scores following discussion of this criterion. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion D3 (Community Involvement):** The reviewers noted that the applicant has a demonstrated history of working with community groups and that the project application stated that the applicant will look for opportunities to partner with organizations including Greenagers and Great Barrington Trails & Greenways on project-specific initiatives. Two reviewers raised their scores to reflect the community involvement opportunities described in the application.
- **Criterion D4 (Potential for Adverse Socioeconomic Impacts):** One reviewer identified a potential for adverse socioeconomic impact associated with loss of development potential at the site. Other reviewers disagreed, and one reviewer referenced a study in Massachusetts demonstrating the local economic benefits of land placed in conservation. One reviewer raised their score in agreement with this assessment.
- **Criterion D5 (Complementary with Community Goals):** The reviewers noted that the project appears to complement the Great Barrington Open Space Plan. One reviewer indicated that they had not taken this into consideration and raised their score in acknowledgement of this aspect of the proposed project.
- **Criterion D6 (Public Outreach):** The reviewers noted that the applicant has a demonstrated history of public outreach and that the project application described that the applicant will look for opportunities to continue to partner with local groups (including Greenagers and Great Barrington Trails & Greenways) on project-specific initiatives and educational recreation events. Two reviewers raised their scores to reflect that the application “includes general mention of public outreach”. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.
- **Criterion D7 (Diverse Partnerships):** The reviewers discussed that the application did not identify contributing partners beyond the project applicant; however, several reviewers noted that the applicant’s organization is funded by contributions from a diversity of sources. One reviewer indicated that they did not feel that contributions by the applicant (regardless of the applicant’s funding sources) were relevant to assessment of partnership diversity. No reviewers changed their scores following discussion of this criterion. Unanimity among individual scores was not achieved in the course of the discussion, but all reviewers expressed consensus that the final individual scores yielded an acceptable average score for the criterion.

Consensus-Based Evaluation Scoring Summary

Project Name: **Thomas & Palmer Brook Conservation Project**

Project Score: **244**

| CATEGORY & CRITERIA | EVALUATION SCORES | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | GR-1 | GR-2 | GR-3 | GR-4 | GR-5 | GR-6 | Average |
| A. RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY OF PROJECT | | | | | | | |
| 1. Natural Recovery Period | 15 | 15 | 15 | 9 | 15 | 15 | 14 |
| 2. Location of Project | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| 3. Sustainable Benefits | 15 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 11 |
| 4. Magnitude of Ecological Benefits | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| 5. Human Health and Safety | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 6. Benefits to Multiple Restoration Categories | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 7. Enhancement of Remediation/Response Actions | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal (max=85) | 80 | 74 | 74 | 68 | 74 | 80 | 75 |
| B. TECHNICAL MERIT | | | | | | | |
| 1. Technical/Technological Feasibility | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| 2. Technical Capacity of Applicant and Project Team | 15 | 15 | 9 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 14 |
| 3. Potential for Adverse Environmental Impacts | 10 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 9 |
| 4. Measurable Results | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 7 |
| 5. Contingency Actions | 6 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 7 |
| 6. Administrative Capacity of Applicant and Project Team | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Subtotal (max=65) | 57 | 53 | 49 | 61 | 57 | 61 | 56 |
| C. PROJECT BUDGET | | | | | | | |
| 1. Relationship of Expected Costs to Expected Benefits | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| 2. Implementation-Oriented | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| 3. Budget Justification and Understanding | 15 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 13 |
| 4. Leveraging of Additional Resources | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 5. Coordination and Integration | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Subtotal (max=60) | 53 | 47 | 45 | 53 | 51 | 51 | 50 |
| D. SOCIOECONOMIC MERIT | | | | | | | |
| 1. Enhancement of Public's Relationship with Natural Resources | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| 2. Fostering Future Restoration and Stewardship | 15 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 13 |
| 3. Community Involvement | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| 4. Potential for Adverse Socioeconomic Impacts | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 5. Complementary with Community Goals | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 6. Public Outreach | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 7. Diverse Partnerships | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Subtotal (max=75) | 67 | 59 | 59 | 65 | 65 | 62 | 63 |
| Total Score (max=285) | 257 | 233 | 227 | 247 | 247 | 254 | 244 |